

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Make St. Patrick's Day Even Greener

The month of leprechauns, shamrocks and green beer is upon us. But these days the term “green beer” takes on a whole new meaning. Participation in the traditions of St. Patrick's Day should be enjoyed responsibly on many levels. There are opportunities to lessen your impact on the environment and, although DES does not promote the consumption of alcohol, we do promote lessening your environmental impact while enjoying your favorite beverage. Here are a few suggestions on how to green your beer.

Support Local Breweries – Not only are you supporting a local business, you are cutting down on the transportation impact of a bottle of brew from a distant land. Many breweries offer “take home” glass jugs called “growlers” filled with your favorite brew and, when the empty container is returned, give a discount on your next purchase.

Choose Draft Beer – When dining out or visiting your favorite watering hole, order up a beer on tap. Hundreds of bottles are eliminated from the waste stream when brews are served from a keg in a reusable glass.

Drink Organic Beer – Organic beers are certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which means the barley and hops are organically grown: no toxic pesticides, artificial fertilizers or chemical preservatives. Drinking organic (and buying organic) is a good way to support more sustainable agriculture.

Switch from Glass to Aluminum – Beer in a can is better for the environment than bottled beer. Aluminum is more easily recycled than glass. Aluminum cans are unique in that it's possible for a can to be recycled, turned into a new can, filled and back on store shelves in 60 days. Freight impacts are reduced because aluminum is lighter than glass. Despite the negative stereotype that sometimes comes with can beer, many craft brewers are turning to aluminum to contain their brew. Craft beers generally are made in small batches by small breweries and are typically more complex in taste than mainstream beers. Some brewers feel that cans improve quality because the beer isn't tainted by light and is exposed to less oxygen than bottled varieties. Look for more offerings to appear in cans as this trend grows.

Support “Green Breweries” – Do a little research on your favorite beer company. Check out their website to see if they are going the extra mile to achieve environmental responsibility. Many breweries are turning to the sun to lower their carbon footprint by installing solar panels to supplement their energy use. One brewer in Vermont invented a patented device that turns brewery waste into natural gas used to fuel the brewing process. Anheuser Busch, a Governor's Pollution Prevention Award winner, recycles more than 99 percent of the solid waste it creates, including leftover grain from the brewing process, by using it for cattle feed. The company also

developed a technology using nutrient-rich wastewater from the brewing process to create and capture a renewable fuel that provides up to 15 percent of the fuel for ten of its U.S. breweries.

It is fitting that this holiday celebration coincides with the return of spring. The color green, shamrocks, leprechauns and green beer all come to mind. When planning your St Patrick's Day celebration, wear green and try something local, on tap or organic! Being responsible *and* green allows you to enjoy your beer even more!